

Grongah National Park Management Statement 2013

Park size:	22,900ha
Bioregion:	South Eastern Queensland
QPWS region:	Sunshine and Fraser Coast
Local government estate/area:	Fraser Coast Regional Council North Burnett Regional Council Gympie Regional Council
State electorate:	Callide/Maryborough

Legislative framework

✓	<i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i>
✓	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990</i>
✓	<i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth)</i>
✓	<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>

Plans and agreements

✓	Bonn Convention
✓	China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
✓	Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

Thematic strategies

✓	Level 2 Fire Management Strategy
✓	Level 2 Pest Management Strategy

Vision

Grongah National Park will be managed to protect its high conservation values and biodiversity. The park will continue to protect part of the Burnett River catchment and threats from fire and pests will be managed in cooperation with neighbours, lessees, permit holders and other land management agencies. Cultural heritage values will be identified and protected and self reliant visitors will be able to enjoy low key recreation opportunities.

Conservation purpose

The park was gazetted in 2007 as part of the South East Queensland Forest Agreement process when Boompa 3, Gigoongan, Grongah, Marodian, Teebar 1 and Teebar 2 forest reserves were combined to form the national park. It protects regional ecosystems of high conservation value including extensive ironbark woodlands, mixed eucalypt woodlands and araucarian notophyll and microphyll rainforests. The park protects several plants and animals of conservation significance.

Protecting and presenting the park's values

Landscape

Grongah National Park is located in the hinterland north west of Gympie and north of the township of Kilkivan. The national park landscape ranges across microphyll vine forests set within steep hills and gullies to open eucalyptus woodland with undulating hills and grazing lands. The section that was formerly Boompa Forest Reserve 3 is rugged to mountainous, with the topography ranging from 200–500m and slopes varying from 10–35 degrees. The general drainage pattern is eastward, via several small seasonal streams into Teebar Creek. The former Grongah Forest Reserve area contains a mosaic of rainforest and eucalypt forest and contains part of the Burnett Range.

Planted Creek and Boonara Creek flow through this area and are both tributaries of the Burnett River. The park protects the headwaters of Boonara and Dividing creeks. The remainder of the park features mountainous terrain associated with the Burnett Range.

The park is largely located in Province 5, Brisbane–Barambah Volcanics, described as containing widespread rhyolite and andesite rocks and associated sedimentary rock; and granitic intrusions associated with elevated topography in the east. It is located in a scenic rural area featuring forested hills and mountain ranges.

Land surrounding the park is used for grazing and growing lucerne and other stockfeed crops.

Regional ecosystems

Grongah National Park protects two endangered regional ecosystems and six that are of concern (Table 1). These ecosystems have been extensively cleared in the past for timber harvesting, pasture and cropping. Weed infestations and inappropriate fire regimes resulting in modified vegetation structure are the principle threats at present.

Prior to gazettal as national park, two areas in the Grongah section were identified as having conservation significance. An area of open, dry sclerophyll forest containing virgin hoop pine *Araucaria cunninghamii* scrub, bunya pine *A. bidwillii* and red cedar *Toona australis* was considered to have high conservation value; and an area containing forest red gum *E. tereticornis* and narrow-leaved red ironbark *E. cebra* was gazetted as a feature protection area under the *Forestry Act 1995* to prevent further logging. These areas are now managed under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* which supplants the previous legislation.

Native plants and animals

There are over 600 plant and animal species recorded for Grongah National Park and those of conservation significance are listed in Table 2. The endangered plant species *Plectranthus omissus* is threatened by weed infestation, in particular lantana *Lantana camara* and blue billygoat weed *Ageratum houstonianum*.

Habitat loss due to agriculture, clearing for grazing, forestry operations and inappropriate burning practices pose threats to the vulnerable powerful owl *Ninox strenua*, black-breasted button-quail *Turnix melanogaster*, glossy black-cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus lathamii* and the plumed frogmouth *Podargus ocellatus plumiferus*. Nest robbing threatens the glossy black-cockatoo and the black-breasted button-quail, with the latter also susceptible to predation by foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and cats *Felis catus*.

Three birds recorded for the park are listed under International agreements (Table 3).

Aboriginal culture

Two native title claims cover the park—claim no. QC2012/004 on behalf of the Wakka Wakka people #5 and claim no. QC2013/003 on behalf of the Kabi Kabi First Nation.

The Sunshine and Fraser Coast areas hold high importance to Aboriginal people and there are many sites of Aboriginal cultural importance across the region. Site records in the surrounding region include Aboriginal burials, middens and canoe trees but none have been recorded for the park possibly due to the absence of formal surveys. Little information is available about the extent of occupation and the degree of the parks cultural significance to Traditional Owners.

Opportunities exist to improve relationships with local Traditional Owner groups and involve them in park management.

Shared-history culture

European settlers came to the Wide Bay Burnett area in the middle of the 19th century. Sheep and cattle grazing, timber harvesting and citrus farming commenced at this time and were consolidated by the construction of the railway network in the 1880s. A hut, a windmill and two sets of stock yards are all located on the park and are in current use by stock grazing permit holders and/or lessees. Their cultural heritage value has not yet been assessed. It is possible other evidence of prior activities exists on the park but details are unknown.

Tourism and visitor opportunities

Mountain biking, horse riding, four-wheel driving, bushwalking and motor cycle touring are recreational activities undertaken within Grongah National Park. Current recreational use is low and the road network within the park is very limited in scope and standard. Access to the park is possible in two wheel drive vehicles along Mudlo Road while access along Planted Creek Road is only possible in four-wheel-drive vehicles after wet weather.

Partnerships

Regular liaison is maintained with neighbours and organisations with shared interests in park management, such as fire authorities and local government.

Other key issues and responses

Pest management

A large number of pest plant species growing on the park. Infestations are monitored and fire and chemical control methods used where appropriate. Of major concern is a very large infestation of groundsel *Baccharis halimifolia* covering 560ha located at the headwaters of Boonara and Dividing creeks. This area was previously logged for pine and hardwood between 1960 and 1970 and records indicate the presence of groundsel was first identified in 1959. Timber harvesting and fires in this area have contributed to the development of a groundsel thicket. Due to the size of the area affected, the use of biological control methods is considered the only cost effective measure available to manage this infestation and this has been used since 1986. Groundsel bush rust *Puccinia evadens* has proven to be reasonably effective in preventing any further spread.

Wild dogs *Canis lupus familiaris*, cane toads *Rhinella marina*, cats *Felis catus*, red deer *Cervus elaphus* and pigs *Sus scrofa* are known to be in the park, and foxes *Vulpes vulpes* may also be present. Baiting programs are used to control wild dogs and opportunistic shooting is used to manage red deer and pigs.

Fire management

Fire is an important tool in controlling pest plants and maintaining regional ecosystem structure and integrity. Wherever possible, eucalypt open forests and woodlands should be burnt only when there is sufficient soil moisture to maintain ground litter and fallen timber habitats. Generally they require low intensity fire at 3–6 year intervals which produce fine scale mosaics of unburnt areas. However, regional ecosystems 12.11.8, 12.12.12 and 12.12.28 are best managed with low to moderate fire intensity every 4–25 years with the aim of maintaining a mosaic of grassy and shrubby understoreys. *Acacia harpophylla* open forest is managed most effectively when using fire at low to moderate intensity every 6–10 years to provide a buffer from vegetation surrounding remnant scrubs. The associated reduction of fuel loads reduces the risk of incursion by wildfire. Frequent fires may eliminate acacia, casuarina and other obligate seeding species.

Pockets of notophyll and microphyll vine forest require careful fire management. Vine forest communities are fire sensitive and not normally flammable. Broad-scale management involving small fires on land surrounding vine forest communities and shrubland on rocky peaks throughout the year reduces the risk of wildfire damage. Planned burns should not create a running fire into vine forest and soil moisture retention in surrounding vegetation limits fire behaviour and intensity.

Fire intervals and intensity are adjusted according to the observed health of the ecosystems and the fire ecology of plants of conservation significance to protect plant reproduction processes and respond to changing weather conditions. The threat of fire entering the park from adjoining freehold land is always of concern.

Lease and permit holders carry out most planned burns with assistance and guidance from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) staff when required. They are required to submit burn proposals which are assessed and approved by the Sunshine Coast Burnett Region Fire Referral Group.

Resource use

An area of freehold, in-holding land is located near the centre of Grongah National Park. Access to this property is through the national park along an unfenced gazetted road.

There are a total of 11 leases for grazing and stock grazing permits covering approximately 80 per cent of the national park with the longest expiring in 2038. Apiarists have access to 29 registered apiary sites on the park.

The hut, windmill, stock yards and caravan that are located on the park and being used by stock grazing permit holders and/or lessees will need to be managed once these authorities expire.

References

- Blakers M, Davies SJJF & Reilly PN 1984 *The Atlas of Australian Birds*. RAOU & Melbourne University Press: Melbourne.
- Davidson C 1993 *Recovery plan for the collared legless lizard (Delma torquata)*. Report for ANCA Endangered Species Programme. Department of Environment and Heritage, Brisbane.
- Garnett S 1992a *The Action Plan for Australian Birds*. Australian Nature Conservation Agency: Canberra.
- Garnett S 1992b *Threatened and Extinct Birds of Australia*. RAOU Report No. 82; RAOU & ANPWS: Melbourne.
- Hughes P & Hughes B 1991 Notes on the Black-breasted Button-quail at Widgee, Queensland. *Aust. Bird Watcher* 14, 113–118.
- Pavey CR 1995 Food of the Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua* in suburban Brisbane, Queensland. *Emu* 95, 231–232.

Management directions

Desired outcomes	Actions and guidelines
<p>Native plants and animals</p> <p>Regional ecosystems and species of conservation significance are protected and appropriately managed.</p>	<p>A1. Implement recovery plans or conservation plans for species of conservation significance.</p> <p>A2. Establish key monitoring objectives for species of conservation significance, and support monitoring programs that achieve these objectives.</p>
<p>Aboriginal culture</p> <p>Aboriginal cultural values are identified and protected.</p>	<p>A3. Encourage Traditional Owners to identify and document values, sites, artefacts and places of cultural heritage significance so that management strategies and decisions relating to fire regimes, access and track maintenance minimise potential threats to these values.</p>
<p>Pest management</p> <p>Introduced plants and weeds are managed effectively.</p>	<p>A4. Continue to implement Level 2 pest management strategy with particular focus on managing the extensive groundsel infestation.</p> <p>A5. Continue to monitor the effectiveness of biological control measures in managing the groundsel infestation.</p>
<p>Tourism and visitors</p> <p>Opportunities are provided for self-reliant visitors to enjoy natural values.</p>	<p>A6. Rationalise road access/firebreaks to support management intent.</p> <p>A7. Develop a communication strategy to outline the appropriate uses and behaviours expected on the park to enable users to enjoy natural and cultural values.</p>
<p>Fire management</p> <p>Threat of fire entering the park is reduced and fire is used to maintain ecosystem diversity and manage species of conservation significance.</p>	<p>A8. Continue to consult with Traditional Owners, lease and permit holders and neighbours when developing fire management proposals.</p> <p>A9. Continue to implement the Level 2 fire management strategy with regard to the fire ecology of native plants and ecosystems, and protection of native animal habitat.</p>
<p>Resource use</p> <p>Lease and permit holders adhere to the prescribed conditions of their authorities relating to fire and pest management, straying of stock and alignments.</p>	<p>A10. Consult with leaseholders and permit holders to establish good working relationships with regard to park management issues and ensure that lessees comply with the conditions of their authorities.</p>

Tables – Conservation values management

Table 1: Endangered and of concern regional ecosystems

Regional ecosystem number	Description	Biodiversity status
12.3.3	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> woodland to open forest on alluvial plains	Endangered
12.12.26	<i>Acacia harpophylla</i> open forest on Mesozoic to proterozoic igneous rocks	Endangered
12.3.11	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> , <i>E. siderophloia</i> , <i>Corymbia intermedia</i> in open plains on alluvial plains usually near the coast	Of concern
12.11.8	<i>Eucalyptus melanophloia</i> , <i>E. crebra</i> woodland on metamorphics + /- interbedded volcanics	Of concern
12.11.14	<i>Eucalyptus crebra</i> , <i>E. tereticornis</i> woodland on metamorphics + /- interbedded volcanics	Of concern
12.12.8	<i>Eucalyptus melanophloia</i> woodland on Mesozoic to proterozoic igneous rocks	Of concern
12.12.12	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i> , <i>E. crebra</i> or <i>E. siderophloia</i> , <i>Lophostemon suaveolens</i> open forest on granite	Of concern
12.12.28	<i>Eucalyptus moluccana</i> open forest on Mesozoic to proterozoic igneous rocks	Of concern

Table 2: Species of conservation significance

Scientific name	Common name	Nature Conservation Act 1992 status	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 status	Back on Track status
Plants				
<i>Bosistoa transversa</i>	three leaved bosistoa	Least concern	Vulnerable	-
<i>Choricarpia subargentea</i>	giant ironwood	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Cupaniopsis shirleyana</i>	wedge-leaf tuckeroo	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	High
<i>Hernandia bivalvis</i>	cudgerie	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Olearia gravis</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Plectranthus omissus</i>	-	Endangered	Endangered	Low
<i>Rhodamnia glabrescens</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Rhodamnia pauciovulata</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
<i>Senna acclinis</i>	-	Near threatened	-	Low
Animals				
<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami</i>	glossy black-cockatoo	Vulnerable	-	-

Scientific name	Common name	Nature Conservation Act 1992 status	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 status	Back on Track status
<i>Delma torquata</i>	collared delma	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	High
<i>Ninox strenua</i>	powerful owl	Vulnerable	-	Medium
<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>	koala (South East Queensland bioregion)	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	-
<i>Podargus ocellatus plumiferus</i>	plumed frogmouth	Vulnerable	-	Low
<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	grey headed flying-fox	Least concern	Vulnerable	Critical
<i>Turnix melanogaster</i>	black-breasted button-quail	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Critical

Table 3: Species listed in international agreements

Scientific name	Common name	BONN	CAMBA	JAMBA	ROKAMBA
<i>Ardea ibis</i>	cattle egret	-	✓	-	-
<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	white-throated needletail	-	-	-	✓
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	rainbow bee-eater	-	-	✓	-

BONN – Bonn Convention (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals)

CAMBA – China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

JAMBA – Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

ROKAMBA – Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement